

The Annual Conference for Research in Education – ACRE
2018 Conference Proceedings



10th Annual Conference for Research in Education
Social Justice in Troubling Times: What does it mean and what's to be done?
Critical issues in socially just research and practice
Faculty of Education, Edge Hill University
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ACRE 2018 Welcome Celebrating 10 years of ACRE

We introduce this volume by celebrating the tenth Annual Conference for Research in Education (ACRE). To mark this, we have compiled some of the papers and presentations from the conference to publish as our first annual set of conference proceedings. This enables us to share, validate and celebrate the work of participants, and act as a legacy for the research and generation of knowledge of conference participants. We also drew upon this anniversary to launch other key initiatives, with which to drive forward and support the growing research culture in the faculty and beyond.

Firstly, we offered the **New Researcher's Award**, in the form of close support to the new researcher delivering the most promising paper, to enable them to have the paper shaped in a form suitable for submission to a peer reviewed academic journal of their choice. This year's award was made to Ella O'Doherty for her work on Lesson Study. Further details can be found on page 25. The quality of submission was extremely high, and in recognition of this, we have also provided support for publication to two runners up, Louise Hawxwell, for her autoethnographic study, *Daring to Tell My Story* (see page 56), and Daryn Egan Simon, for his exploration of socially just citizenship education through the medium of film. (See page 56).

Secondly, the conference convenors Mary and Vicky, worked with the editorial committee of *Educational Action Research Journal* to plan a **Special Issue** of the journal on the timely theme of **Action Research for Social Justice**. Conference participants had the opportunity to submit an extended abstract to this call for papers. The journal will be published in 2021.

Our conference this year was a one-day event, 'topped and tailed' by two excellent keynote speakers, Professor Liz Atkins, and Professor Tina Cook.

Liz Atkins is Professor of Vocational Education and Social Justice at the University of Derby. She has an international profile within the PCET sector in the context of both practice and research. Her doctoral research, published as *Invisible Students, Impossible Dreams* (2009) is considered ground-breaking in drawing attention to the issues around the education of young people with complex needs on low-level vocational programmes. This work, in common with all her teaching and research, is informed by a strong commitment to social justice.

She is currently working on a project evaluating the impact of a more socially just curriculum for young people on level 1 programmes at Guernsey College, and her new book, *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity*, co-authored with Professor Vicky Duckworth, was published in February 2019. Her Keynote drew on the book *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity* (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019) to explore what social justice means as a theoretical underpinning to research in education, and ways in which this may be enacted.

Tina Cook is Professor of Education at Liverpool Hope University. At the core of her work is a focus in on inclusive practice – in both research and professional practice. Using qualitative research, particularly collaborative/participatory action research, she seeks ways of facilitating the inclusion, as research partners, of those who might generally be excluded from research that concerns their own lives. Her methodological approach centres on ways of fore-fronting voices of those directly involved in a situation as a means of improving the quality of their lives. She has published on both methodological issues in relation to the quality of participatory research approaches and issues related to research in practice. Her own research focus is with people who find themselves marginalised, particularly people with learning disability, people with cognitive impairment, and their family members.

She is an Executive Committee Member of the International Collaboration for Participatory Health Research, the lead for the UK Participatory Research Network and an Editor of the International Journal of Educational Action Research.

ACRE 2018 Editorial

Mary McAteer and Vicky Duckworth

We live in a world of increasing complexity, in which in/equalities have become increasingly evident, for example between and within local communities at a micro level, and the global north and south from a macro perspective. Living in 'liquid' and uncertain times (Bauman, 2007), in which the impact of the 2008 banking crash still resonates internationally (Dorling, 2015), we see political upheavals, and their consequences for people and the communities we serve and beyond (IAP, 2018).

In the United Kingdom, the gap between the richest and poorest has grown to its widest for several generations (Dorling, 2015). Indeed, cuts to welfare, wages, and public services under austerity programmes, have affected populations nationally and internationally in terms of widening inequalities, both in and beyond education. These have been given greater imperative in the UK following the Grenfell fire which drew into sharp focus the ways in which less affluent working communities, as well as those characterized as marginalised, and can be denied access to safe, decent housing and led to wider debates about differentiated access to health, welfare and education (e.g. Hanley, 2017; OxfamBlogs, 2017; Duckworth and Smith, 2018; 2019).

We are a pivotal point where research for social justice requires more than rhetoric – it demands that we direct our focus, energy and resources to generating genuine and sustained social and educational change. It demands also that we facilitate true participation in our research endeavours, enabling voices of the often unheard, to be both heard and values. It is often the case that academic structures and process my, in themselves be incongruent with social justice approaches, preferring instead research that generates income but without an authentic, socially just reach which address the complex social and political issues associated with educational in/equalities (Atkins and Duckworth 2018, Wood and McAteer, 2017). However, it is vital to find critical spaces in which we can challenge the status quo, and ways to overcome hierarchical barriers, so that we can connect with communities, practitioners, researchers and policy makers.

Our theme for this year's conference, **Social Justice in Troubling Times: What does it mean and what's to be done?**, challenged us to consider the contexts in which we act, and the concepts which inform our actions. Our opening address by Prof. Liz Atkins, urged us to remember that we need to 'walk the walk', as well as 'talk the talk.' This move towards praxis, 'reflection and action directed at the structures to be transformed' (Freire, 1970: 125) is in line with Arendt's (1958) theory of action, which views action as a mode of human togetherness and participation. The conference offered a critical and dynamic space for reflection, unity, participation, validation and dialogic engagement; a powerful platform for exploring ways to move towards more equitable and socially just models of education and educational research.

We opened the conference with **Liz Atkins** asking us to consider the meaning of the term 'social justice', reminding us that it is a 'slippery concept', often used in an uncritical and instrumental way. She discussed and exemplified the difference between socially just research, which can empower participants, and research for social justice, which can, for example, inform policy. Her paper, which drew on her work with Vicky Duckworth, while writing their book, presents us with a three-part definition of socially just research:

- Research that claims social justice in both the way in which it is conducted as well as its aims
- Research which is a moral and ethical endeavour in its planning, conduct, and outcomes
- Most examples of this are participative and/or collaborative studies which involve and seek to empower all participants at all stages of the research process, often on a co-researcher basis

These were meaningful concepts which provided lenses for dialogue throughout the day.

Mike Stoddart highlighted that social justice is also an activist concept, and challenged us to explore ways in which academics can, and do make a difference to the challenges faced by migrants in Lancashire and the surrounding areas. A number of case studies exposed how local refugee families have benefited from the outreach work of trainee teachers at the university, and from the provision of other cultural and sporting activities. What is also evident in these cases however, is that the benefit is mutual. The lives of students and academics have been made richer through these initiatives, and we also see how the work has enriched the research of staff, and informed curriculum development

Katherine Blundell's work focuses on the experiences of adults with a dyslexia diagnosis and the ways in which both living with dyslexia, and having a formal diagnosis of dyslexia impact on affective as well as cognitive aspects of their lives. A strong theme of self-perception and identity is evident from her interview data, and challenges us all in relation to the ways in which we form socially just and equitable practices in education and beyond.

Alice Diver and Helena Knapton explore ways in which university programmes concepts of 'social mobility' and 'employability' may be seen as more than instrumental, and encourage students to become socially aware, critical thinkers. Common themes emerging from their data across three areas of professional practice indicated that a sense of belonging, demonstrated by congruence with the culture, beliefs and values found in the workplace were elements of employability valued by both employers, and new employees, and in many cases, more so than employability 'skills'. Universities may have to reconceptualise their understanding of employability if they are to provide their students with social mobility

Ella O'Doherty's paper takes a classroom-based approach, exploring notions of pedagogy in a period of neoliberal austerity. Drawing on the interpretation of 'teachers (in such a landscape) as servants' (Dorling, 2018), she notes the injustice of the *'disappearance of a process of model of curriculum development grounded in a philosophy of education, and draws on Aristotle's idea of phronesis, as a space capable of developing virtuous action; generative of research based upon a situated judgment of what is educationally worthwhile.'* She calls for a return to the concept and operation of the 'teacher as researcher', offering teachers a rich theoretical and agentic virtue-based pedagogy.

Louise Hawxwell's autoethnographic exploration of social justice in self-study research explores ways in which beliefs, values and practices intertwine, and mutually interact. Her sense of empowerment at finding a voice, and finding ways in which to share that voice gives her the sense that thinking can, and should be disrupted as a precondition for 'doing something about perceived injustices' (Cotton and Griffiths, 2007, p.550).

Daryn Egan-Simon's study explored ways in which participation can help develop children's agency, as they together embarked on a socially just citizenship education programme. The use of high-level critical thinking and deep dialogue were key features of what he has called 'democratic learning experiences', and provide the underpinning knowledge and skills through which ideological indoctrination may be challenged.

Our final conference session was a plenary keynote, delivered in the form of a provocation, by **Tina Cook**. In asking her to provide us with an address in the form of a provocation, we were acknowledging the contested nature of education practice and research, and opening ourselves up to dialogue which questioned some of our 'taken-for-granted-assumptions'. Drawing on the notion that socially just research is epistemologically democratic, Tina suggested to us that partnership might in fact be a barrier to, rather than an enabler of democratic knowledge-building processes. If partnership working does not disrupt dominant discourses, how can it be a mechanism for radical change? How can it generate new knowledge and understanding?

Positioning our final session in this way, provided us all with a framework for critical reflection on the day, and left us with important questions about our own teaching and research practices. The challenge to critically interrogate, value and disrupt all knowledges in partnerships, so that our work is generative of new knowledge, rather than just a collection of knowledges, is seen as a fundamental part of socially just action for shared learning.

We would like to thank everyone for their participation in the conference, and for making it such an enjoyable and enriching event. Particular thanks are due to Charlotte Hastings, Julie Kirby and Professor John Diamond for their help and support with the organisation of the conference, and of course all who participated in the event.

Mary McAteer and Vicky Duckworth,
Editors of ACRE 2018 Proceedings

Reclaiming Social Justice For Education: walking the walk and talking the talk

Professor Liz Atkins, University of Derby

Introduction

This short paper, based on a Keynote Address at the 2018 ACRE conference, draws on the book *Research Methods for Social Justice and Equity* (Atkins and Duckworth, 2019) to explore what social justice means as a theoretical underpinning to research in further education, and ways in which this may be enacted. Social justice is a slippery concept, and the paper begins by exploring different definitions. It highlights the difference between socially just research, which involves and empowers the participants, and research that is conducted with the aim of 'making' social justice, for example by informing policy, and illustrates the point with practical examples. I move on to offer some practical examples of research concerned with social justice, which illustrate the critical distinction we have drawn between socially just research and research for social justice.

Ancient and contemporary understandings

The concept of social justice is fundamental to this paper, and is also generally considered to be the key underpinning value of education. However, it is a problematic concept, not least because it is a 'slippery term' (see Atkins and Duckworth, 2019), which holds multiple contested meanings and interpretations. These different meanings and interpretations have their origins in ancient philosophic and religious texts (for example, the works of Aristotle and Plato, as well as the Holy books of all the Abrahamic religions), the works of the enlightenment (e.g. Hume, 1740), and more recent writers such as MacIntyre (1981); Rawls (1999) and Griffiths (2003). Work with particular reference to further and adult education (FAE) includes that by Avis (e.g. 2016), as well as Atkins (e.g. 2009). Across millennia, these and other authors have debated the meaning of justice and of social justice – indeed, Plato's *Republic* (Lee, 1955) is essentially an extended debate about the nature of justice. It is worth noting that the Greek word for justice, on which the ancient (and some more recent) debates are premised, has a wider meaning than the English translation, and can variously be interpreted as implying, amongst other things, morality and 'right conduct' (Lee in Plato, 1955). Notions of morality and 'right conduct' form the basis of two (related) core concepts – both with differing interpretations – which arise from the debates around justice. Those concepts are reciprocity and the notion of the common good, which is explicit in the ancient and modern religious teachings of all Abrahamic religions, and might also be considered to relate to notions of equity, as well as to the concerns around in/equalities and marginalisation that characterise educational research.

Debates on the meaning of justice emphasise concern for others and society from the earliest times, including, for example, the writings of Aristotle, who argues that 'the greatest good ... is justice, in other words, *the common interest*' (Aristotle *Politics* III, II. 1282b 15, my emphasis) and the work of the philosopher David Hume (1740:318, my emphasis) who argued that "[I]t was therefore a concern for *our own, and the public interest*, which made us establish the laws of justice". Each of these writers demonstrates concerns related to in/equality. Similarly, St Augustine of Hippo, who drew on the

teachings of Aristotle, emphasised fairer distribution of goods (*Letters*, CCXI, AD 423), and also stressed responsibility for others, particularly where they are less advantaged, resonating with present-day work such as Rawls' debates on 'fairness' (1999:301/308), and Sen's (1985) emphasis on welfare and capabilities. Other work in this area includes that by Morwenna Griffiths' (2003: 54) who has argued that social justice is 'a dynamic state of affairs that is good for the common interest, where that is taken to include both the good of each and the good of all', and also (paraphrasing Ghandi) that 'social justice is not the end, it is the way' (1998: 12).

Despite this long and philosophical history, social justice is a widely mis-understood term which has been appropriated by groups and politicians of very different ideological backgrounds. This is reflected in a range of government papers, from both Labour, Coalition and Conservative administrations, which cite achieving social justice as a key aspect of educational and economic reform (e.g. see DfES 2003a; 2003b; 2006; DBIS/DfE 2016, 11). Further, despite it being widely considered to be an underpinning value of education, teachers' understandings of the term are somewhat confused. In research on this issue (see Atkins and Duckworth, 2016) teachers variously defined social justice as: 'a community/governmental movement towards socialism' which would facilitate 'equality ... education, the legal system etc', and the 'implementation of equality and inclusion/democracy in the classroom. Comes under British Values in the teaching standards'. Other contributions included 'keep diversity in a classroom and teaching British Values', and being 'given a second chance'. Two participants mentioned 'kindness' in their response; other than this, social justice was broadly defined in terms of education, and educational concepts such as inclusion, respecting diversity, supporting disadvantaged children and young people, by an overwhelming majority of participants. Six stated that they 'didn't know'.

Social Justice and Research

In relation to research, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) suggest that social justice can be constructed as a form of politics, encompassing both action and value. Therefore, in the context of critical educational inquiry, both these aspects of social justice are critical in guiding the design, methodological and theoretical frameworks. This raises a number of questions. For example, what 'counts' as socially just research? Is it research which aims to inform policy and practice? Research which is participative and where the researched have equal control over the research process? Is it only research with marginalised communities?

Whilst writing the book, this was an issue which exercised us, and we made the critical distinction between socially just research, and research for social justice. In this context, we define socially just research as:

- Research that claims social justice in both the way in which it is conducted as well as its aims
- Research which is a moral and ethical endeavour in its

- planning, conduct, and outcomes
- Most examples of this are participative and/or collaborative studies which involve and seek to empower all participants at all stages of the research process, often on a co-researcher basis

And we define research for social justice as research that might be used to apply to a wide range of studies which, whilst not involving other participants as co-researchers has aims and questions which seek to uncover or illuminate issues of concern in relation to social justice. We argue that this includes critical studies from a wide range of theoretical perspectives which address issues of inequality and oppression, and crucially, inform pedagogy and/or policy in terms of developing a more socially just education system. We include studies from a broad range of contributors to illustrate these points. These contributors include Kay Heslop, whose research might be described as socially just. Kay's study, entitled *Intergenerational Engagement: a participatory action research study investigating the inclusion of older adults in the lives of young children* involves practitioners and children as co-researchers in a collaborative process of developing practice through the inclusion of older people in a forest school project. Kay utilised research circles, reflection, and photographs as methods with practitioner co-researchers, and floor-books as a means of generating data with nursery aged children. In contrast, a good example of research for social justice was provided by Julie Sealy. Julie's project, *Supporting Parents of Children with Developmental Disabilities in Barbados*, sought to enable parents to develop improved strategies for managing the behaviour of their disabled children. Taking an ethnographic approach, Julie was conscious throughout of the implications of being a white researcher in a post-colonial context, where she was also, by virtue of her professional role, in a position of power in relation to her participants.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there is one final, important point to make. Because social justice has been adopted by a range of activist groups and people from different ideological backgrounds each with a different agenda, philosophy or ideology, this has created two problems. Firstly, the term is often used uncritically, and without any real understanding of what it actually means. This is never helpful, and can mean that some situations generates dispute and conflict. The second point relates to this, and concerns individuals and groups advocating on behalf of people with a particular exclusionary characteristic, who use social justice as a justification for a particular rights agenda. Clearly, we should all have equitable rights, irrespective of who we are or what we believe in. However, when social justice is used to justify a particular rights agenda, it can sometimes come into conflict with a different rights agenda (for example, think of the right of the veiled student to cover her face, and the right of her Deaf classmate to inclusion through lip reading). In these situations, it is often those with the loudest voices who have the greatest influence, and this means that someone else's rights are diminished. That is not social justice, but it is oppression, and

it highlights the importance of respecting others, taking a dialogic approach to the negotiation of solutions, and only ever taking actions which are based on respect for the other person.

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Action for Refugees: A multi-faceted response to the crisis by staff and students at Edge Hill University

Mike Stoddart, Edge Hill University

Promoting a multi-faceted, positive response to the refugee crisis that includes learning from the experiences, skills and knowledge of all involved

Following visits to the Calais “Jungle” in 2016 by members of staff in the Faculty of Education, Action for Refugees (AfR) was established at Edge Hill University (EHU). In July 2017, the Faculty and I4P supported a one day conference that brought together academics, activists and members of refugee communities to explore good practice, find out about the challenges of the field, and look to develop work that would make a tangible difference in terms of research and teaching.

Delegate feedback reported that the conference enabled participants to increase their knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis and make a contribution to a multi-faceted, positive, response. Delegates took part in discussions with UNHCR staff working in a refugee camp in Alexandria, Northern Greece via a live link-up and with refugee presenters now living in our local area. They were also able to learn first-hand about relevant research undertaken by academic colleagues, the work of local agencies with refugees and the practical support for refugees already provided by some of our staff and students in response to the crisis. As part of this event, the Dean, Dr Lynette Turner and the Director of I4P, Professor John Diamond committed to support future collaborative work that would ensure all ITT programmes reflected refugee awareness and that the university’s facilities were available to support refugee initiatives. The aims and objectives of the group align closely to the University’s principles of equality, diversity and social justice. We contribute to the creation and maintenance of an inclusive culture where equality is practiced and diversity is valued. We want to share relevant research and increase knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis. We also want to provide practical support to refugees, asylum seekers and those agencies working with them. The group plays a role in ensuring that all teacher-training graduates from the University are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees. Perhaps most importantly, we want to learn from the experiences, skills and knowledge of refugees and asylum seekers.

For the purpose of this report, we refer to refugees to include all those who have either been granted refugee status or who are going through the process of claiming refugee status (asylum seekers).

There are three main themes to our work; community engagement, research and curriculum development:

1. Community Engagement

All AfR events are open to our contacts in the community. Events particularly focussed on community engagement have included our Welcome Days. These have been organised by staff, students and refugees to provide mutual learning opportunities in subjects including IT, art and design and language learning. Making new connections with local NGO supporters through these events is a happy by-product of this work. One local volunteer commented that she had never

been on campus despite living in Ormskirk for more than thirty years. She was very impressed by what she saw.

With the support of West Lancashire CVS, Shahin and Peiman led Farsi Language sessions for trainee primary teachers. Together they produced a teaching Farsi booklet for classroom use (extracts overleaf).



Group of students and refugee trainers, Farsi Taster Day

It is clear how these events contribute towards meeting our goals:

1. Increased knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis.
2. Ensure that teacher-training graduates from the Faculty of Education are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees.
3. Learning from the experiences, skills and knowledge of refugees and asylum seekers.
4. Contribute to the University's equality, diversity and social justice agendas by valuing and engaging with our diverse communities.



Members of Action for Refugees presenting to the ACRE 2018

The football proved so popular that it became a fortnightly fixture involving local refugees, students and staff. At one game involving teams from Skelmersdale and Liverpool, two former neighbours in Aleppo met for the first time since fleeing the civil war in Syria. Dr. Jack Sugden, who organises the football stated, “By organising football games between and among refugees that have been resettled from a collection of nations, such as Eritrea, Iran, Syria, Iraq...along with students and staff from Edge Hill. What we have begun is a process of

mutual learning and understanding that can be facilitated through sport.”

Our community engagement includes volunteering. Members of the group have performed voluntary work with a number of agencies here and abroad including with West Lancs CVS, Care4Calais and Refugee Community Kitchen. We have helped organize a placement teaching English to BAME women at 4Wingsvoluntary organization in Liverpool. We have organised fundraising events for charities working with refugees and asylum seekers and provided practical help and support with job seeking, applications for educational courses and access to healthcare.

In December 2017 staff and students raised over £100 to support Care4Calais as well as donated sleeping bags, food, toiletries and warm clothes for the refugees in and around Calais. Mike Stoddart wrote a blog post on his visit in January 2018 and a follow-up post on his third visit in January 2019.

AfR works closely with the Global Unity society of Edge Hill University's student union. In 2018 the society was awarded the Chancellor's Scholarship in recognition of its good work.

2. Research

Sharing the latest research is a vital aspect of the work of the group. By engaging in and sharing relevant research, we aim to Increase knowledge and understanding of the refugee crisis. These events also raise awareness of EHU's commitment to research-informed activism in the field and support the development of collaborations between faculties and with researchers in other universities.

1. 'The Role of Schools in Resettling Refugees: Case studies from Scotland and South Australia'.

In October 2017 Dr Melanie Baak, of the School of Education, University of South Australia and then a Visiting Research Fellow of the University of Glasgow, shared her research with a packed audience of staff and student trainee teachers. Aspects explored including the role of EAL staff and language, the preparation of teachers to respond to refugee learners, parent engagement, racialisation and pedagogical and assessment flexibilities. Feedback was excellent with the following representative comments. ' "Brilliant session" and "I will definitely use this on teaching practice."

2. Dr Julia Hope, Goldsmiths' University - , 'Children's Literature about Refugees: A Catalyst in the Classroom'.

This was next in the Action for Refugees seminar series. Julia shared her wealth of experience from her PhD research and a decade as a 'refugee teacher', working with children from a refugee background in the classroom. Her book addresses one of our most pressing global issues, often called "the migrant crisis", in a form accessible to younger children. For child refugees to feel that their experiences are validated, and for others to understand their situation, engaging with the growing field of children's texts on the subject is crucial. Teachers also need to be encouraged to find ways in to tackle such challenging topics, with fiction providing the perfect catalyst.

Julia's presentation explored the range of ways in which children's books can support children with a refugee background to recognise themselves in fiction, as well as the opportunity for children without these experiences to develop empathy and understanding. Her examples demonstrated that even very young children can through discussion and art demonstrate a sophisticated understanding of the reasons people leave, and what it might be like to come to a new classroom, a new school, a new country. Feedback from this session was also excellent. One delegate stated, 'Excellent session – thoroughly enjoyed it. Thankyou!' Another, who is a trainee teacher commented, 'We need more talks like this.' Students and staff reflected on the way the session would help them to work with refugee families and children in the classroom.

3. Growing Up In Afghanistan Photography Exhibition by Guy Smallman, Hale Hall, September – October 2018

This powerful exhibition of the work of freelance photographer Guy Smallman took up residency in Hale Hall, one of the original buildings on the University's Ormskirk campus, for ten days beginning on 24th September 2018. Guy has worked all over the world in many different countries and environments specializing in social issues such as human rights and poverty. Since 2008 his main focus has been Afghanistan. His work from that country has appeared in many publications including most UK newspapers, *FT Weekend* magazine, Channel 4 news and the BBC. He was also interviewed for John Pilger's documentary film *The War You Don't See* after he became the only foreign journalist to reach the scene of the Granai massacre in Taliban controlled Farah province of Afghanistan. During his time in Afghanistan he built long term relationship with the internally displaced people living in terrible conditions in camps around Kabul. His exhibition featured their children, many of whom were born in the camps. The exhibition culminated in a fascinating question and answer session with Mr Smallman attended by academics, professional staff and students.



Guy Smallman and Dr Clare Woolhouse at the opening of Guy's photo exhibition of refugees in Afghanistan, Hale Hall

As well as presenting the research of others, members of AfR are engaged in their own research. These are closely aligned with the aims and objectives of the group and includes:

1. Dr Charlotte Hastings and Martin Ford – ‘Diverse Access to Teacher Education: EHU Primary ITT’.

Stemming from the question of a member of the refugee community "how do I go here?" following a visit to Edge Hill. The research looks to the experience of AfR members in supporting refugees to apply for HE, and asks how support can be offered to students from this particularly vulnerable population to enable them to fulfil their full potential, in the context of initiatives to welcome refugee students nationally, and particularly in the north-west.

2. Dr Jack Sugden – ‘Imagining community through sport at Edge Hill University’.

By organising football games involving refugees who have been resettled from a places including Eritrea, Iran, Syria, and Iraq along with students and staff from Edge Hill, we have begun a process of mutual learning and understanding facilitated through sport. For the refugees these games are something to do that costs nothing and gives them a chance to get to mix with young students and work on their English. This is a dialogical process. Students and staff who take part enhance their cultural capital and global knowledge. Getting to know the refugees, engaging with them as equals, can inform their development as teachers, scholars and people.



The Action for Refugees team, Staff football competition 2018

3. Mike Stoddart – ‘From Syria to Speke; the experience of refugee families relocated under the UK Vulnerable Persons Relocation scheme’.

It is a widely held view that the education system is a key institution in the successful resettlement of refugees (see for example, Taylor and Sidhu, 2012; Pinson and Arnot, 2010 and Bergset, 2017). The first stage of this study aims to shed light on how successful schools have been in assisting the resettlement process of pupils from a refugee background. This research will identify some of the factors that have hindered or helped Syrian refugees thrive in their new home.

AfR works with and supports Migration Working Group - North West (MWG-NW). This brings together academics, organisations and practitioners working on migration who are either based in the North West of the UK, or researching migration in this region.

3. Curriculum Development

It is vital that as a major provider of teacher education in the UK, Edge Hill University ensures that all teacher-training graduates from the Faculty of Education are better able to meet the learning requirements of refugees. This is entirely congruent with the Faculty's values, philosophy and vision. It is essential, therefore that the curriculum is fit for purpose in this respect. The following are examples of the contributions made by AfR in meeting this aim.

1. MA in Educational Enquiry and Professional Learning module - Professional Practice for Social Justice.

Mike Stoddart leads this newly developed module which recognises that education in its broadest form can be regarded as an ethical, moral and political project underpinned by notions of social justice and equity. Students are required to explore thoughtfully and critically the extent to which current systems, policies and practices enhance inclusion, equality and diversity so that barriers that exist can be addressed. There is of course, scope for students to investigate themes of direct relevance to refugees including the refugee experience in education.

2. Wider perspectives strand introduced within the Primary Undergraduate APD (Academic and Professional Development) Programme.

Martin Ford as subject lead and Sarah Wright as Wider perspectives strand Leader, have ensured that this programme enables trainee teachers to recognise and reflect upon the diverse range of learners, including refugee children, in our schools. Trainee teachers on this programme have been involved in the planning, preparation and delivery of Welcome Days for refugees held on campus. These have included the provision of mutual learning opportunities including IT, art and design and language learning. Together with colleagues in the refugee community, they have produced the teaching Farsi booklet for use in the classroom referred to in section 1. Trainees have been able to develop a strong understanding and awareness of the impact of the background of learners and how to support them in achieving their potential. They are required to reflect upon the learning requirements of refugee children and to confidently provide excellent provision for them.

3. Post-Graduate Certificate in Further Education and Training – Expert Practitioner Series.

Sessions have been provided for trainee teachers on this programme on meeting the learning requirements of refugees by experts in the field from Further and Higher Education. These have been very well-received and have contributed to outstanding achievements by trainees in providing learning that takes account of social justice, diversity and inclusion agendas.



Participants at the 2018 Refugee Welcome Day - Arts

We wish to acknowledge again the support given to Action for Refugees by Edge Hill University and in particular the Faculty of Education and I4P.

We are very keen to ensure that the development of the group is led by the priorities of those directly involved. It is important to us that the group is open to refugees and asylum seekers as well as representatives from the wide range of organisations working to support them.

To find out more, contribute to our blog or to join our mailing list, please e-mail A4R@edgehill.ac.uk

Mike Stoddart - Faculty of Education, EHU

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Different kinds of “smarts”: Case studies in dyslexic identity and the need for a holistic approach to support

Katherine M. Blundell, Coventry University

Abstract

This paper relates to a pilot study for a larger, mixed methods project into the impact of dyslexia diagnosis. Of interest is the effect of diagnosis dyslexia on identity, self-belief and also reading progress. Data from two case studies based on interviews with dyslexic adults are presented. Each interview lasted for approximately 60 minutes, with participants asked to reflect on their experience of assessment, their interpersonal relationships and reading behaviours. Transcripts of the interviews were unitised, annotated and then coded. Emerging themes include the timing of assessment, perceived difference between self and others, disability and disclosure, as well as the maintenance of interpersonal relationships. In addition to informing the next stage of data collection, these case studies go some way towards exploring the impact of assessment and diagnosis of dyslexia. Also provided here is some insight into achieving a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of dyslexic children and adults.

Background

With regards to dyslexic individuals, Carroll and Iles (2006) concluded that education providers do not offer adequate emotional support, leading to a recommendation for an assessment of emotional wellbeing to be offered to dyslexic students entering Higher Education (HE). The period of transition between compulsory education and HE is one which occurs late in an individual's schooling, and one which not all learners with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) will undertake. Is this then too late to attempt to identify emotional difficulties and to begin to address issues of wellbeing?

Following the SEND reforms in recent years, mental health and wellbeing has received renewed attention. This includes an emphasis on the need to identify and support learners with mental health difficulties within the revised SEND Code of Practice (CoP; DfE, 2014) and in line with the Equality Act (2010). In the current climate of financial difficulty in the education sector, where providers are forced to cut back services, support and intervention, are we able to offer adequate support where emotional difficulties coincide with, or potentially arise from Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia? How well are we addressing the legacy of those who were not afforded protection and support in the past? It would appear that support for mental health and wellbeing has been lacking for some time, and that counselling for teenagers with learning difficulties has been given “low priority” (Alexander-Passe, 2006). The call for counselling services made available for dyslexic learners, to ‘bridge the gap’ caused by emotional avoidance has seemingly gone unheard.

Methodology

The methodology is inductive, with themes emerging from the data. Semi-structured interviews are used as to allow for expansion of ideas and follow up questioning and to generate detailed information and data. Face-to-face contact with

participants also allows for reassurance and two-way questioning which is highly appropriate with participants who experience learning difficulties. With participant permission, interviews were recorded. Summary and clarification techniques were used throughout, as to aid understanding and interpretation. Following data collection, thematic analysis was undertaken.

Participants

Two adult participants were recruited for the pilot study, both of whom had been identified as experiencing SpLD; dyslexia. Both participants were known privately to the researcher in their role as specialist (SpLD) teacher / assessor, and had expressed an interest in participating in research.

Aaron was 26 years of age at the time of interview. He demonstrated persistent difficulties with reading whilst in primary school and was not progressing as expected. He described school as “dismissive” of his problems, and so private assessment was pursued by his parents, the outcome of which was the identification of dyslexia at the age of 8. After this, Aaron moved schools and attended a setting with a “specialist unit” as he describes it. GCSEs and A-Levels were challenging for Aaron, and he did not initially secure a place at university. He has since undertaken an Access course, achieved GCSE maths, and has completed the first year of a medical degree.

Aaron was 21 at time of interview. Spelling has always been very challenging for Adele, but she described coping well with other aspects of early education. With the onset of GCSE study, Adele raised some concerns with her English teacher, who signposted her to the school's Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator (SENCo). An assessment was arranged and led to a diagnosis of dyslexia at age 13. Adele describes issues with organisation and memory, affecting education, employment and social relationships. Adele undertook BTEC study, securing a place at her chosen university where she is about to enter the third year of an arts/design related subject.

Both individuals work part-time alongside full-time study. Aaron chose to attend at a local university and resides with his parents. Adele has lived in halls of residence and now in a shared house with other students.

Author/Researcher

Data in this study were gathered by a postgraduate research student, studying for PhD. The researcher is also an experienced Specialist (SpLD) Teacher / Assessor, and a former SENCo and as such, is bound by professional standards as set out by the various dyslexia professional bodies. The researcher is well practiced in gathering background information from children and adults with SEND; a skillset transferable to this semi-structured interview situation.

Procedure

Informed consent was obtained, including permission to record the interviews. Both interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, during which time, participants were asked to reflect on their experience of assessment, their interpersonal relationships and reading behaviours. Upon completion, participants were debriefed and provided with an information sheet to signpost appropriate sources of information and support for dyslexia should this been needed; namely the contact details for charitable dyslexia organisations, to include the BDA (2018). The researcher's contact details were included, should participants wish to remove their data from the study, along with the contact details of the researcher's Director of Studies and the faculty's ethics lead.

Approach to data analysis

Transcripts of the interviews were produced for ease of analysis and the identification of themes within the dataset. "The main purpose of analysis is to look for similarities, groupings and items of particular significance" (Bell, 1999) therefore, data analysis commenced with unitisation and annotation of the interview transcripts. These annotations were then coded and attributed to emerging themes (McNiff, 2010). This process was carried out using NVivo 10 (QSR international, 2012) qualitative data analysis software. Finally, a narrative was produced, containing comments and quotes where relevant, along with some initial interpretation.

Results

Data suggests numerous emerging themes, broadly organised under four areas and presented in Table 1.

Table 1
Emerging themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Identity	Agreement with the diagnosis Timing of the assessment/diagnosis Difficulties attributed to childhood Disability and disclosure Perceived differences
Interpersonal relationships	Bullying Maintenance of friendships Cohabitation Immaturity of others
Dyslexia awareness	Amongst educators and education providers At home (pre and post assessment) In the workplace Within friendship and social groups
Reading	Reading difficulties Reading behaviours (in the family home) Assistive software and technologies Coping strategies for reading

The purpose of the pilot study was to trial the semi-structured interview questions, and as the first step in identifying themes within a larger interview study, and ultimately a mixed methods study into the impact of dyslexia diagnosis. Therefore it is likely that these broad areas and the themes themselves will be developed and refined in time. For now, some pertinent themes have been extracted for discussion here relating to **identity** and **interpersonal relationships**.

Identity

Timing of assessment/diagnosis

Both participants felt that their dyslexia assessment/diagnosis should have occurred earlier.

'I'd been lagging behind... so [dyslexia assessment] probably should have been done a bit earlier... it was kind of under the radar a bit, but they got it in the end.' Aaron

'No, far too late because by the time the assessment was sorted and they were happy with what it was...it was around the time I started my GCSEs.' Adele

Attribution of difficulties to childhood

Although Aaron and Adele described persistent difficulties with learning, both participants attributed at least some of their difficulties to childhood, and as something they had overcome some time ago.

'The reading difficulties I had stopped being an issue when I was about 13 or 14. It's not really an issue at the moment. I feel that I'm quite a competent reader. It was more an issue learning, I was a bit delayed than my peers but I was able to catch up in the end. It took a while.' Aaron

Initially, this seemed to be a self-protective mechanism, by way of distancing themselves from their dyslexia, but on reflection and with further analysis of the data, this may be a result of their increased dyslexia awareness as a "developmental disorder", or perhaps a result of their having developed metacognitive skills, compensatory strategies, or even their choice of post-16 programme as described by Adele.

'And as soon as I went to college I didn't need help or intervention because there were no essays. There were no tests. Just purely what I could already do and what my brain was good at. So it made it a level playing field.' Adele

This poses questions about whether dyslexic learners who see many of their difficulties as being in the past, and/or those with a good understanding of their own difficulties and well-developed coping strategies would be willing to seek disclose their SEND and pursue support.

Disability and disclosure

Since Aaron and Adele are both undergraduate students, support would usually be made available to them via the Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA), paid to HE students with disabilities, to fund support services and to help manage additional costs incurred due to their disability (Student Finance England; 2018). For students with SpLD, this includes specialist equipment and non-medical assistance (often one-

to-one study support). In addition, DSA is made available to those with diagnosed mental health difficulties. Receipt of DSA is dependent upon suitable evidence of a disability, and disclosure of that disability. In order to obtain DSA for SpLD, a diagnostic assessment report must be available. It is not means tested and is non-repayable. Both participants were aware of this support, but only Adele had made a successful application, with Aaron attributing his not having applied to the information, advice and guidance received upon enrolment.

'I was told that the university would get back to me as to what [support] I would and wouldn't get...I was told that my parents are too rich. The university are aware of [my dyslexia] but I haven't got any financial support, as I was told I was from too wealthy of a background to receive funding for that...I know people who have received it, but not me personally.' Aaron

By means of exploring the reason for the incorrect information given, or a potential misunderstanding, a point to mention here is that Aaron is undertaking a preregistration healthcare course. Until recently, NHS bursaries funded students on such courses, rather than the DSA. This change could account for the confusion.

Although in receipt of DSA, other than her one-to-one support sessions, Adele was not completely aware of the support afforded to her by the allowance. This is despite support being based on the recommendations in a post-16 diagnostic assessment report, and a subsequent Needs Assessment in which support is negotiated and agreed with the student, and then costed on behalf of Student Finance England. Support and equipment should therefore be explicit.

'...I did [apply for DSA], and I don't really what it is. Well...it paid for a tiny, tiny [sic] portion of my laptop [laughing]...it pays for my tutor, but...we've never done anything dyslexia wise, ever. He kind of has abandoned that and he's really looking at where I need him and that's organisation and picking up on where I'm struggling to find motivation, which is great. I wouldn't say he's a dyslexia tutor...' Adele

Interestingly, Adele is separating dyslexia and organisation here, despite having previously described organisation as one of the main difficulties she experienced as a result of her dyslexia. She had also stated that many other people don't accept that as an integral feature of dyslexia.

'...organisational is like the biggest...[difficulty] for me...you can kind of put up with the other things...but organisational, that's every day isn't it, it's constantly there...in everything, that's like work, projects, and things like [that].' Adele

'[Peoples' reaction is] really negative...I don't think people know [dyslexia is] an organisational thing. But even when they do know, it's hard to believe 'cause it can always feel like an xcuse.' Adele

Both participants were asked about the terms "disability" and "disabled" when applied to dyslexia. Their responses suggest a paradigm with Aaron in particular acknowledging his

"learning disability" whilst at the same time not being "disabled". Aaron and Adele suggest other, more suitable terminology to include "specific need" and "disadvantage".

Interestingly, both participants discuss disability resulting from dyslexia, referring to this as "hidden" or "non-visible". Comparisons are made with severe learning difficulties, also physical disabilities which are perhaps seen here as more impactful than dyslexia, both in general and in relation to education and learning.

'I do have a learning disability, but I feel the word disabled applies more so to people with a severe learning disability which is more visible.' Aaron

'My [parent] definitely does [think dyslexia is a disability] but I don't think I do...I don't equate disabilities with non-visible disabilities, like physical [impairment]...there [are] so many different [impairments]...I wouldn't associate in my head with physical disabilities...But then I don't think people put dyslexia in a disabled category anyway...' Adele

Suggestions are also made by Adele that difficulties arising from dyslexia are minimised by coping strategies and by the programme of study or the chosen activity. In addition, the suggestion that the strengths and difficulties associated with dyslexia can cancel each other out compared with other disabilities is made. The important factor here however, is that of environment or context.

'I know that it [dyslexia] makes me scatty...but it's nothing I can't deal with, it's minimal compared to people who really struggle with other things.' Adele

'If I was doing something academic, I would definitely say I had a disadvantage. But with [an art based subject], it doesn't feel like I need [support] at all.' Adele

'Maybe it evens out in the end? But not in our academic system in the UK, there's not a cat in hell's chance that dyslexia is going to be an advantage. I suppose in that sense it's a disadvantage in all UK systems.' Adele

Building on the theme of disability and accessing support, both participants held some quite complex attitudes and beliefs relating to disclosure, mainly discussing disclosure as an active or reactive strategy to requests or responses from others, instead of something done proactively in self-interest. Beginning in primary school Aaron described a reluctance to disclose his difficulties to others and only by default did others become aware of his SEND.

'When I moved primary schools the first time, because I was in the [special educational needs] class, everyone knew. If anyone asks [now], I tell them.' Aaron.

Aaron did however highlight how situations can become uncomfortable for him and others should he not mention his dyslexia until it is noticed.

'...people make comments without realising they're saying something offensive. So I get, "Your handwriting is like a five year old." quite a lot. And I say, "That's because I've got a

writing disability.” And they go, “Ha, ha...” and still think I’m joking. Then I’m like, “No I’m serious.” And then they’re so apologetic. Or people tend to make comments if I’ve written something like on social media. Or when I write things I swear I’ve spelled it right but when I look back I’ll see like a glaring spelling mistake, always. But it’s not something I get offended about.’ Aaron

Adele described a similar approach, disclosing her dyslexia only when necessary, by means of explaining her difficulties once evident to others, or by means of justifying the need for a particular arrangement or reasonable adjustment. When asked about having to read aloud, Adele said she would probably “bow out” and would attribute this to her dyslexia as this “validates” her reaction and response.

Perceived difference between self and others

Both participants identified some difference between themselves and other people. Some comparisons were positive, but others identified some perceived injustices, especially in relation to teaching and learning. Aaron described the frustration of understanding a subject or topic well, but being superseded by other learners with better developed writing skills. Adele’s experience is one of having to lie about difficulties in order to mask differences between herself and others in her class.

‘...history I really loved, but as I got older, with history, it became more about writing the essay more than what you actually know about history, which I found frustrating because there were people in the class who knew nothing about the subject, but they were getting like As, and I was getting Es and I knew more about it than they d[id]...even though they’d put the dates and events wrong, they’d still have been given a top grade because they’d written a good essay. [I disliked] how the course was structured.’ Aaron

“...in primary school, we played [a] game [where] you were asked a question [and] whoever could say “yes” had to run [across the playground]...one of the girls said if you’re on “free reading” which was if you’d gone through all of the books on the reading programme... I was hardly through the first colour, and I was like, “How on earth are people all the way through?”...everybody ran, so I ran as well because obviously I don’t want to look like an idiot.’ Adele

‘...a parent volunteer...who [listened to us read]...asked me what band I was on so I just told them I was on free reading and skipped the whole reading system [laughing] which probably didn’t help obviously, but just because I thought “I’m so far behind”, I told them I was on free reading and they bought it, and then I was on free reading and didn’t do any of the books, which is not great obviously...’ Adele

Other perceived differences occurred as a result of targeted support and intervention. Issues include missing “favourite lessons” to undertake additional literacy support, but more so being taken out of practical lessons where arguably dyslexic learners can be more independent. This potentially minimises experiences of success and opportunities to develop self-

esteem and self-efficacy. Other issues include the provision of in-class support from teaching assistance, to which other pupils “did not take well to” in Adele’s experience, and thus potentially limited the amount and type of social interaction with peers during this time.

‘I love PE...it’s one of the only times you can breathe...I would normally actually forget [to go to my literacy lessons] and I would pretend to forget as well...PE is my time to chill out and relax and chat, you know not worry about things. I don’t need a helper in PE so I was on my own, but then I got taken out of it as well.’ Adele

‘I felt isolated from kind of everybody else, even when I had a helper in class. You know when you chat to your friends in class, you don’t want to do it in front of...an adult there [to help] me. [My friends thought they] might get into trouble from the adult for chatting with me, and that meant that people didn’t want to chat to me during lesson time.’ Adele

Some positive differences were described by the participants, in the first instance relating to a difference in cognition and problem solving. Again, this benefit is mitigated by environmental or contextual factors.

‘Dyslexia its thinking differently...in my opinion it’s not a bad thing it’s just not the way that most people think, so things are designed for other people’s way of thinking and that’s where you fall behind...’ Adele

‘I think it [dyslexia] really helps with I do [art related subject]. You come at things from a different angle completely, and you can visualise things better... I’ve found.’ Adele

‘We’ve all got very different “smarts” in three different ways... [I’ve got] logic and problem-solving smarts. My friend [has] writing smarts. [My other friend has] test smarts... although those two are probably closer in their way of thinking...I think my smarts are more practical in a real-world situation. I think mine are more applicable to be honest. It must have been about [the end of high school] when I realised that...’ Adele

Interpersonal relationships

Maintenance of friendships

Both participants describe difficulties with maintaining friendships, some of which seem to be a direct result of difficulties associated with dyslexia.

‘A few years ago...[my friend was in a show]...I was trying to remember and I completely forgot her show. I’d bought a ticket...[but] forgot to go...my other friends didn’t remind me, and she took so much offence to that. It was like she didn’t talk to me for months. I felt so bad, and there’s nothing I could do, I tried to explain myself, I tried to make it up to her but she just was not happy about it...I don’t think our friendship really got back [to what] it was.’ Adele

Other issues seem related to the fluidity of the grouping Aaron found himself in as an individual identified as experiencing SEN. In addition, Aaron describes deliberately ceasing contact with pupils from his first primary school. When asked about

the reasons for this, Aaron described some bullying from other pupils at this time.

'...he [my friend] was moved to a specialist school so I lost my friend...We kind of lost contact. I think he was just too much for the teachers to handle as he was always fidgeting...I think he was always loud in class and too much for the school to handle, so they made him move to this specialist unit.' Aaron

'From primary, [I've] not really [kept in touch with many people]. I kind of cut all contact. It was before the days of the internet. I still get people trying to add me on Facebook and it's like, "I haven't seen you in twenty years, why do you care?"' Aaron

Bullying

Although their experiences of bullying have been quite different, both participants referred to bullying from fellow pupils and peer groups. Aaron experienced bullying at primary school which he attributes to visible difficulties / differences. He also described the dynamics of his current friendship group and the "banter" between them.

'[The other children] thought of me as weak and an easy target.... I wouldn't say it was anything to do with the dyslexia per se. I also have kind of a diagnosis of hypermobility so when I was...younger, I also had...an odd posture and walk what they focused on...I was quite clumsy with my walking so that's what they were going for to be honest.' Aaron

'...occasionally...I'll mispronounce something and someone will make fun of it, but it's more banter than bullying...so it's positive making fun of it rather than something I'd feel sad about.' Aaron

Cohabitation

Issues with cohabitation were reported. Adele lives in shared student accommodation and finds it quite difficult to utilise her coping strategies when using shared facilities. This has also been the case when living in the family home. A lot of friction between her and her flat mates and her family members was described.

'I leave my washing in the washing machine forever. I forget I've even put my washing there in the first place, so days and weeks can go by and my washing is still in there until someone says, "Whose washing is in the washer?" "Oh god its mine!" And when I put it out and then I forget to put it away and I'm like I'll do it in a sec. It's in other people's way essentially.' Adele

'...the other thing I do is leave all the stuff I need for the next day outside my door. They really hate that, it really winds them up because its clutter. But if I move that stuff into my room I'll forget it. It's a small sacrifice in my mind, but they don't like it at all.' Adele

'It probably does affect my family life [as well], to the extent that everything is messy. And that's my brain. I try and explain this all the time, like I have that pile is there because that's my brain. That's my, "I have to take that" [pile]. I have things on the floor because if I put them on my wardrobe, I forget they

even exist... My mum gets absolutely infuriated about my room and how messy it is, but it's the same thing, if it's not out, I don't know where it is.' Adele

Organisation

Organisation was described by both participants as a significant difficulty resulting from their dyslexia. As well as the obvious impact of work and study, organisational skills were identified by both as a prerequisite for social interaction. Adele in particular feels this has affected her reputation and how others perceive her both personally and as a student.

'I'd probably like to be a bit more organised in terms of my work [and] more organised in my approach to things.' Aaron

'...organisational [difficulties are] constantly there... organisationally [dyslexia has] affected everything. I've like misread timetables and missed lectures and workshops and forget things completely... [I] forgetting to go to things...like meeting up with people [when] I've said I'll go out...' Adele

'I get really angry at myself. I forget things all the time. And my brain is so scatty, it makes me infuriated when I forget things. Even though I know there was no hope of me ever remembering that. It's gone. You can't get it back. It makes me furious.' Adele

"[Adele], she's all over the show." I am like that. I'm late for things, forget things even happen. Just all over the show... it's different for different groups, but everyone would say I'm scatty... people think I should show up on time for things.' Adele

'I know that they [my flat mates] talk about [me and my coping strategies] that all the time... I know that they do. So maybe it [dyslexia] does affect that... I know that they bitch about it and I'm quite OK with that, but it does affect their opinion of me...' Adele

Conclusions

At this point, themes are described as emerging, and analysis of the full interview study is incomplete. It would therefore be inappropriate to draw some firm conclusions. However, there are some pertinent points, not least how Adele and Aaron both felt that the diagnosis came too late, and that their experiences would have been better if diagnosed earlier. Whilst this is understandable for Adele who was identified in secondary school, Aaron's dyslexia was identified around the age of 8, before which it is unusual for a formal diagnosis of dyslexia to be given. Would individuals perhaps feel like this, regardless of the age at which assessment occurs?

The need to strike a balance between addressing learning and cognition difficulties, with the social and emotional needs of a dyslexic individual is clear. Adele's experience in particular seems to favour one over the other, perhaps due to the timing of her diagnosis, so close to GCSEs and intensity of the academic support put in place for Adele which overwhelmed her. There doesn't seem to have been a graduated response here as would be expected as per the "Wave" model of intervention in place during Adele and Aaron's education,

replaced recently by the and “Assess, Plan, Do, Review” model described in the SEN(D) CoP (DfES 2001; DfE 1994; 2015).

Terminology seems to be very important with regards to the take up of support and services. Summarised quite nicely by the comment “I have a disability but I am not disabled.” With regards to support in HE, for which a formal diagnosis is required, both participants went on to express concern or guilt about accepting funding and support, and felt this would be at the expense of students with severe learning difficulties or physical impairments. Their difficulties, rather than being perceived as different to those with other disabilities are perceived as less impactful, or they see themselves as less worthy of support perhaps, and just needing to work harder (Alexander-Passe, 2015). Also supported here are the finding of Carroll and Iles (2006), as it seems that dyslexic individuals are still not fully aware of the services and support afforded to them, even though disability funding and services are in place and well-established.

If counselling services were made available consistently for dyslexic learners, should academic and emotional support be discrete, or integrated with existing support mechanisms? How will the need be identified and who will make such recommendations? Currently, diagnostic assessments for SpLD do take into consideration factors of self-esteem and motivation, but do not make detailed recommendations regarding mental health and wellbeing, nor do they seek to identify and diagnose mental health difficulties. In HE, in order to receive formal support for mental health and wellbeing, a dyslexic individual would need to have a separate mental health condition diagnosed by an appropriate medical professional. But in treating the two assessments as discrete undertakings, are we taking a holistic view of the individual in terms of their assessment and support needs? How appropriate would recommendations be in such reports? Are we paying lip service to what we know about dyslexic identity; self-concept, self-esteem and self-efficacy? (Burden and Burdett, 2005; Burden 2005; 2008).

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Social mobility and professional development: A study of two pathways in higher education

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Abstract

The main purpose of higher education is to deliver social mobility via acquired qualifications and a variety of 'employability skills'. Government priorities bear this out, reflecting its policy of linking degree success to the UK's future economic growth (Wolf, 2002) and highlighting how increased social mobility offers public and personal benefits. Moreover, the UN's Sustainable Development Goals require HEIs to consider ethical impacts upon the wider community, in terms of alleviating poverty and promoting social inclusion and equality¹. In England, this is most clearly evidenced by the new Teaching Excellence Framework, with Student Outcomes used to help measure quality and 'value' of a University education. 'Graduate employment' is a key metric, so that the ability to generate 'work-ready' (Dhakal, et al. 2019), professionally 'employable students' and 'ideal' future employees (Allen et al, 2013) has become an over-arching concern within the sector. However, there is no generic blueprint that can deliver employability: 'whole person models of experiential learning' instead frame employability as 'integrative, reflective and transitional' (Eden, 2014: 266). As Newcombe and Moutafi (2009) argued, many employers now seek more than traditional 'CV'-based displays of academic ability, seeking instead some evidence of professional 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016) or 'work attachment' (Knight and Yorke 2003:5). Despite shifts towards the integration of employability within undergraduate study, the defining, embedding and *delivering* of evidenced employability continues to be difficult.

However, there are programmes that consistently deliver high levels of employability and opportunities for upwards social mobility, i.e. those that lead directly into professions such as teaching and law. Within such courses, it is argued, the key task for academics is to ensure that graduates face 'the correct level of challenge' (Eraut, 2007: 418) to prepare them for their future career. This should be achieved by having them complete assessments that spark high levels of motivation and maintain (or engender) both resilience (Pryce-Jones, 2014) and academic buoyancy (Martin, 2008). The literature shows that there is little research on employability development across different professional programmes, with the aim of informing the delivery of employability within traditional graduate programmes. Working within a University in the North West of England, the authors are investigating key employability skills and attributes across the legal and education professions as identified by significant stakeholders (employers): we ask how these are addressed through appropriate challenges as incorporated into assignments, tasks and experiences within the associated degree programmes. The findings highlight key areas of both commonality and difference. The project has the potential to impact upon the academic sector in identifying how and when skills and attributes can be realistically integrated into (and developed within) degree programmes. It will also provide evidence to the private sector of what exactly might be achieved, and what employers of recent graduates might need to address at the start of their employment.

Introduction

In 2015 at Edge Hill University three senior lecturers were awarded the post of Senior Teaching and Learning Fellow for their individual Faculty and therein began a journey that has led them to delve more deeply into and to question the ways in which employability is developed for their students. The three lecturers are involved in the delivery of professional programmes – Law, Mental Health and Education – which all have high employability rates which supported social mobility within the region and believe their programmes to be well respected in their respective sectors. The driver for the initial project was the intention to identify how and when appropriate employability skills and attributes can be realistically integrated (and developed within) degree programmes. In addition, it was hoped that it may provide evidence to the private sector of what can be realistically achieved within a degree programme, and what employers may need to address at the start of their employment.

The initial investigations focused on a comparison of the approaches that each programme utilised to support the aspirations of its students and seemed to align favourably with the research as we understood it. However, further and more rigorous investigation with the employers of our graduates has led the researchers to question some of our pre-conceptions and understandings of how employability is developed within a Higher Education context, even on professional programmes. Although the investigation is on-going with further rounds of research and analysis to be undertaken, this article provides an insight into our initial findings.

Literature Review

Within current political rhetoric, at least, there is the drive to redefine the main purpose of higher education to be a vehicle to deliver social mobility via the acquisition of qualifications and a variety of 'employability skills' that we are told that employers want. The idea is not a new one and rests upon the wider notion of enabling students to be socially aware 'critical thinkers' (Nussbaum, 1997). As UK Government policy the purpose of a university degree to deliver social mobility has returned to prominence but had been evident earlier, such as in the linking of degree success to the UK's future economic growth (Wolf, 2002; Goddard, 2009) and highlighting the impact on both public and personal benefits. However, this argument for the potential benefits of social mobility can not only mask a prejudice against the working classes but also seek to pass the blame onto the poor neighbourhoods for society's ills (McKenzie, 2015).

The UK Government has an unconscious ally in the United Nations whereby there is a wider imperative in their Sustainable Development Goals which exhorts Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) to consider the ethical impacts upon the wider community, particularly in terms of alleviating poverty and promoting social inclusion and equality. In particular, Garpur and Rautdesai (2014) argue that the capabilities of students should be developed so as 'to be future generators of sustainable value for business and society at

¹ See further Goal 1 (ending poverty), 5 (achieving gender equality), and 16 (promoting peaceful, inclusive societies and accountable institutions) <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals/> (date accessed 07.02.18)

large and to work for an inclusive and sustainable global economy...' especially in those situations where:

...an unfair and unkind universe...divergent responses epitomize the North/South divide* on development, income disparities, technology transfer, health, the environment, and related problems.'

(King, 2001:485) * whether global or national.

If this is the case then 'there remains an acute need for a much 'sharper focus upon the notion of the greater, common good' ... to engender a socially conscious 'new breed of faculty.' (Muff et al, 2013). And therein lies the question – what is education for? The wider promotion of economic and social development? (Van der Horst and McDonald, 2007) or the 'Advancement of knowledge through research and teaching? (Brennan, Durazzi and Sene, 2013)

In England, the governmental view is evidenced by the new Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework which uses destination data and the earnings of graduates as a metric to measure the quality and value of a University education. Whilst this is approach to valuing a University education is hotly contested, graduate employability will remain as a key metric and so the ability to generate work ready professionally 'employable students' and 'ideal' future employees (Allen et al, 2013) has become an over-arching concern within the sector. This is against a backdrop of '...the demands of increasing marketization and consumerism...' (Thornton, 2015) within the sector and the apparently competing and contradictory need to 'Promote motivation and resilience...' (Pryce-Jones, 2014).

Despite these competing tensions regarding the purpose of Higher Education there have been proven to be clear links between education, employment and employability so that the 'upskilling' associated with the achievement of a university degree cannot be easily ignored (Cable and Willets, 2012).

Whilst this may be the case, there is no generic blueprint that can deliver employability: 'whole person models of experiential learning' instead frame employability as 'integrative, reflective and transitional' (Eden, 2014:266). As Newcombe and Moutafi (2009) argued, many employers seek more than traditional 'CV-based displays of academic ability, seeking instead some evidence of professional 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016) or 'work attachment' (Knight and Yorke 2003:5). Despite shifts towards the integration of employability within undergraduate study, the defining, embedding and delivering of evidenced employability continues to be difficult. As is apparent in the delivery structures embodied in professional courses (such as in Education and Health) and semi-professional degrees such as Law, there is a recognition that '...classroom bound delivery limits the integration of theory and practice; a key element of developing work-readiness skills.' (Ferns and Moore 2012, p. 208). As a result, such programmes ensure that there is significant engagement with not only employers but the environment that they will go into. In Health and Education, this is undertaken through extensive placement opportunities, working alongside professionals and with increasing levels of

responsibility whilst on placement. For Law students, opportunities to work with solicitors and barristers to apply their skills with actual clients and to participate in extensive role plays makes for both a richer experience for the students but also to acquire those work ready skills that not only reflect the 'right level of challenge' as undergraduates (Eraut, 2007: 418) but also 'the ability to perform the roles and tasks required by one's job to the expected standard..' (Eraut and du Boulay, 2001) and thereby embed preparedness for professional practice (Fry, Ketteridge, and Marshall, 2009). For Law this would be to reflect the Solicitors Regulatory Standards, and for Education those who want to teach are expected to evidence their competency against the Teachers' Standards (2013).

The achievement of students against the standards set by the relevant professional bodies are taken to be indicative of other attributes that employers are said to be looking for, such as some evidence of professionalism ...perhaps a visible sense of 'belongingness' (Yorke, 2016) or 'work attachment' (Knight and Yorke 2003:5) and allows for some useful degree of ongoing reflection upon why a particular career or learning pathway was chosen? (Jones and Higson, 2012)

Methodology

The initial stages of the investigation between programmes had allowed us to compare the processes which we each employed in the delivery of our programmes and to identify how we understood they aligned with the literature. The next stage was to identify from the employers and potential employers of our students what they expected from newly qualified graduates coming into the profession and what they understood of our students' experiences that would prepare them for their entry into the profession. Consequently, an exploratory qualitative methodology was used to integrate both positivism and pragmatism, whereby participants have agency in their responses – an aspect that became significant as the research has developed.

Convenience sampling was used in order to benefit from the opportunities that would arise from working within the departments that we were situated and allowed the researchers to make use of the professional networks that arose from their own professional identities. Whilst this could incur bias, it provided access to participants with the necessary expertise and experience in the recruitment of new graduates on a regular basis to provide informed responses to our questions. To provide comparability across the professions it was agreed that each researcher would undertake 10 interviews representing their own profession. This gave an overall sample size of 30.

The intention was to undertake semi-structured interviews so that the participants would be able to reflect upon and interpret their experiences to shed light on how and when students developed appropriate employability skills and attributes. The initial questions were informed by our initial analysis of our programmes vis-à-vis the research as indicated below:

e.g. What do you look for in a new-to-the-profession employee?

Thinking it may include ...

- * ability to be self-directed in their development (reflective practice);
- * to be part of a team, to 'fit' the environment (belongingness)
- * to know what it means to be successful within the environment (profession ready)?
- * professional competency, e.g. Teachers' Standards, BSB, Law Society, SRA

Initial results and analysis

The initial results and analysis have been limited because one of the researchers was unable to undertake the interviews when originally arranged. However, the data that has been obtained has revealed both expected and unexpected differences between the different professions. With regard to education, 9 interviews were conducted with senior leaders responsible for employing newly qualified teachers and from a range of school settings. The interviews were transcribed and provided a rich data set to work with. In contrast, arranging interviews with those in the legal profession proved problematic. At least 15 private practice solicitors were contacted, of which 7 responded. The major difficulty was that with 'interviews' had to be conducted by email, resulting in a reduced data set and without allowing the researcher to delve more deeply into their answers. As a consequence, discussion and analysis developed at two different levels: one as an initial thematic analysis of the data, and the other to understand the different approaches to engaging in the research itself.

The thematic analysis of the data introduced the researchers into approaches and attitudes that were significant in their contrasts. There was one area of commonality, however, which was in that sense of belonging, (Yorke, 2016, Knight and Yorke 2003). Within education, this concept would be expressed in terms of being able to 'fit in with the school' or to 'match the characters of the school'. In the legal profession, this would be expressed more obliquely, such as 'completing the LPC' (Legal Practice Course) or 'by reading up on the business objectives and business plan prior to employment'.

Other identifiable themes of 'beliefs and values', journeying, i.e. developing as a practitioner and the employers role were all significantly different. For those in education, the requirement for new-to-the-profession staff to have a strong ethical underpinning to their role was extremely strong and was regularly mentioned within the interviews – hence the necessity of identifying this to be a theme. In the legal profession, ethics and values were mentioned extremely rarely.

The other two themes are closely related in that in education, it was clear that the schools both recognised that new colleagues did not come as 'the finished product' but that they were at the start of the journey and that the school had a

significant role to play in their development. For a number of the participants this was a direct reflection on their own experiences - both positive and negative – and their desire for new colleagues to be able to thrive within a very demanding context. For the legal participants, the responses indicated that they expected new colleagues to 'acquire these new skills/ attributes after 3 months in the job' with a significant reliance on completing 'the LPC and had gained some experience of dealing with matters in the workplace' indicating that there was a heavy reliance on new colleagues to be self-directed and self-motivated.

The contrasts that have been identified in the thematic analysis are also evident in the levels of engagement by the representatives of the different professions. The law department and the education faculty at Edge Hill University believe that they have very good relationships with the employers that they work with which is evidenced in the range of experiences and placements that students are engaged in. The responses not only challenged this perception, but also the possibility of working more closely with some professions to develop those 'work ready' and 'professionally employable' students (Allen et al, 2013) that universities are expected to be able to develop.

Where next

The next steps in the research are to obtain a full data set across all three professions, which is in hand, and to be able to conduct a more detailed thematic analysis of the three data sets, using the Miles, Huberman and Saldänă (2014) approach to qualitative data analysis. This will allow the researchers to critically review earlier findings as well as identify, code and analyse the entire data set.

Tentative conclusions

As has been argued by Wilson (2012), Goddard (2009) and others, universities have a key role in developing the employees of the future. However, it is not a simple transaction between the university and the student but requires engagement and understanding between future employers and universities as well (Wilson, 2012). This research has indicated that this is possible, but not inevitable with work needing to be undertaken on both sides if it has any chance of delivery the social mobility that Government and the UN seem to desire.

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The New Researcher Award: Note from editors

The next three papers in this journal represent those which the editors felt deserving of special mention. Each was submitted for consideration for the New Researcher Award. The quality of submissions was such that in addition to an award being made, two further papers were selected as runners up. All three authors will receive support to help them submit their papers to a relevant academic journal. Because full text papers are in preparation, each author's work is present in this section in the form of an extended abstract, accompanied by their presentation slides.

Despite the extremely high standard in all submissions for consideration, it was felt that Ella O'Doherty's paper provided a masterly oversight of what evidence-based practices might look like in classrooms. Rich in its theoretical underpinning, it explored the concepts and practices of Lesson Study as a means of enacting practical philosophy, and troubling the post-democratic distortions of teacher professionalism. We are therefore delighted to choose Ella O'Doherty as the recipient of the inaugural ACRE New Researcher Award.

Two further authors had papers selected as runners up; Louise Hawxwell and Daryn Egan-Simon. Their extended abstracts follow, along with slides from their presentations.

'Being taught' by Lesson Study: a pedagogy of virtuosity for the oppressed teacher? (Extended Abstract)

Ella O'Doherty, Edge Hill University

Professor Paul Connelly (2015) in his BERA key note address, *The Trials of Evidence-Based Practice*, acknowledged that Randomised Controlled Trials [RCTs] '...are great for answering a particular question about effectiveness but they are absolutely rubbish at understanding what is going on.' For this, qualitative research is called for and both approaches should run together. In this paper we present a complementary, interpretivist study of data on the experience of primary teachers engaging in an EEF funded RCT on Lesson Study [LS] in the north west of England designed to deepen our understanding of what has been described as a deceptively simple process (Dudley, 2015) of teacher education, thereby voicing a narrative beyond 'what works' (Biesta, 2017).

The significance of the case study derives from Xu and Pedder's (2015:49) compelling review of international literature which concludes that Lesson Study is under-theorised with a 'lack of attention to important questions related to the micro-political dimensions of teachers' collaborative work in LS contexts'. In particular, there is an absence of research that explains 'how and why teachers learn' (ibid: 48). More recently, in considering the convergences and divergences between LS and action research [AR] Stylianou and Zembylas (2018:12) pose the question: 'What constitutes the ethical and political basis of knowledge creation in LS? As teaching and teacher education are 'inherently and unavoidably political' (Cochran-Smith 2005:3) to engage with this question within an age of performativity (Ball, 2003) is to encounter issues of social justice. We argue such a focus in respect of teachers is timely, if not long overdue.

Dorling (2018) has mapped *now* as the moment of *Peak Inequality*. Surveying the educational landscape left by a scorched earth policy of neoliberal austerity he concludes: 'teachers are servants' with diminishing access to the benefits of a 'good' society such as housing, a living wage and the right to family life. Within the classroom the struggle has long been seen as existential, the very soul of the teacher at risk in a performative culture that subsumes autonomy within a new post-professionalism of technical rationality demanding compliance to survive (Ball, 2003, Menter, 2016). A dystopian reality prevails as government policy objectifies teachers as *the* measurable instrument by which education can be made more efficient (Hulme, 2016; Biesta, 2017), as a result, post-democratic distortions of professionalism have transformed teaching into technical-managerial activity and professional knowledge into 'evidence' (Biesta, 2015).

Alongside this, the Enlightenment notion that emancipation requires learning persists but the 'bottom line' of a critical pedagogy for social justice remains largely focused on enhancing the lives of learners by challenging the 'inequities of school and society' (Cochran-Smith et al., 2010:37). More troubling still for Biesta (2017) a discourse of social justice is used as an end to justify the means of a post-democratic order. Yet the democratic deficit at the heart of teacher professionalism remains largely unchallenged as the contradictions in the modern logic of emancipation means teachers are often viewed as the source of power and

alienation by an ideology of learnification that marginalises the teacher within education, and objectifies within a discourse of derision (Ball, 1990). In response, Biesta has calls for the rediscovery of teaching.

Apple has drawn attention to the value of 'simultaneity' of holding the past, present and possible futures in tension, in this way policy analysis: 'will solidify previous understandings, avoid the loss of collective memory' (Apple, 1996:141). As such, Lesson Study is acting as a primary discourse, set within the history of prior discourses – a 'cemetery of past truths' (Veyene, 2010, cited in Ball et al., 2012:138) to which little attention has been paid. Yet the policy trajectory of teacher professional education as a means of emancipation is one of 'lost promise' (Opfer and Pedder, 2011); coaching has been conflated with performance management (Lofthouse et al., 2010) and cult of self-reflection (Perryman, 2017) entraps teachers within the improvement game (Ball, 2003). Action research is often appropriated as an evidence-based methodology 'implicated in maintaining – rather than challenging' (Carr and Kemmis, 2005: 352, or problematising (Cain and Harris, 2013) the prevailing hegemony that teachers research 'what works', more recently, a perceived lack of methodological legitimisation in privileging the local proof route is held to bring the value of Lesson Study itself into question (Stylianou and Zembylas, 2018).

The inescapable conclusion is that the underpinning theoretical frameworks of teacher as researcher and of educational research as originally conceived (Stenhouse, 1975; Elliot, 1991, 2007, 2015) are themselves in need of rediscovery from potential loss. It is important to reiterate what is at stake. The disappearance of a process of model of curriculum development grounded in a philosophy of education, drawing on the Aristotle's idea of phronesis, as a space capable of developing virtuous action; generative of research based upon a situated judgment of what is educationally worthwhile.

The conceptual framework for this analysis therefore takes as its starting point, Stenhouse's notion of practical philosophy, further developed by Elliot as a form of democratic rationality. The originality of the discussion lies in extending this analysis using as conceptual tools, first the social realist principle of ecological agency (Biesta and Tedder, 2007; Priestley et al; 2015) that autonomy is achieved under certain conditions; following from this, the processes of Lesson Study as experienced by teachers are each mapped in relation to Biesta's (2017) pedagogy of the event, the distinction of *learning from* and *being taught* being crucial in theorising how LS offers a space to enact democratic professionalism, the practice of 'wise judgment' that moves teacher research beyond a causal model of professional action.

Lesson Study (Dudley, 2015:4) aims to enable teachers to investigate the complexity of the 'swiftly flowing river' of practice as LS 'gets to the parts that other professional development doesn't reach'. This analysis draws upon data from thirty-one (n=31) research conversations (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) across eleven (n=11) settings with primary

teachers engaged in an EEF funded project in Lesson Study (LS) in the north-west of England. The methodology aligns with key studies in LS, and whilst we acknowledge that educational research 'is fundamentally about people' and 'it is never possible to be truly objective within a subjective situation' (Atkins and Wallace, 2012:54) a claim to rigour is made based on enacted democratic virtues (Elliot, 2015) including peer and participatory reviews of iterative data analysis.

This study concludes that Lesson Study has the potential to trouble the post-democratic distortions of teacher professionalism by creating the necessary conditions for enacting a virtue-based pedagogy generative of 'good' research, in particular, a process based on the 'assumption of equality' (Biesta, 2017) is found to be both possible and of crucial agentic value.

Ella's slides can be accessed **here**

Daring to tell my story – social justice in self-study research (Extended abstract)

Louise Hawxwell, Edge Hill University

In carrying out initial reading for my PhD, I began to explore what it is that informs teachers' practices, especially within outdoor learning. Why do teachers teach in a specific manner, and why are they so passionate about different approaches to delivering the curriculum such as using the outdoors? Many readings refer to how being a teacher is linked to the individual themselves and is much more than curriculum planning, teaching and assessment. Many authors suggest that teacher's pedagogical decision making can be influenced by personal beliefs and values. This can be further extended to an individual's perceptions towards outdoor learning and the outdoors, and how this can impact on the outdoor experiences teachers may offer to their students.

These themes have since developed into my PhD study, which investigates the 'manner in which actions and beliefs intertwine' (Childs, 2005, p.143). I make use of a first-person self-study methodology to explore my own practice as a teacher educator working in Initial Teacher Training and my beliefs relating to the outdoors and outdoor learning.

My choice of research methodology provides me with a critical space in which to carry out an 'intentional and systematic inquiry into [one's own] practice' (Dinkleman, 2003, p.8), providing me with an opportunity to 'capture, unpack and portray the complexities of teaching and learning about teaching' (Loughran, 2005, p.13), focusing on the wider aspects of myself to explore what it is to be me, as both a person and as a teacher educator. Self-study also provides me with 'a means to think about, to understand and to develop my practice' (Ragoonaden, 2015, p.82) through a critical and reflexive identification and exploration of the contexts that I work within alongside my own viewpoints, beliefs and values.

My inquiry involves the use of narratives to generate an understanding of my beliefs, my practices and the ways in which these intertwine and impact upon one another. Personal narratives and stories are a way that an individual's perspective can be communicated, helping to understand 'who and what we are and the things that happen to us' (Goodson and Sikes, 2001, p.41). Teacher narratives can be used to 'enhance our understanding of ourselves as teacher educators, our contexts and our practices' (Kitchen, 2009, p.35), and to construct knowledge of our professional selves and professional identity.

One of the purposes of educational research is to improve the education of all students, with improvement being related to 'the good of each and all' (Griffiths, 1998, p.4), thereby ultimately connecting educational research to social justice. Social justice can be defined as 'the good for the common interest', including the 'good of each and also the good of all' (Griffiths, 1998, p.4). According to Griffiths (1998), improvement of education for all through educational research can be accomplished through increased knowledge. Connelly and Clandinin (2007) believe that self-study research has the potential to generate knowledge about the educational landscape on the 'personal, professional, and program and institutional levels' (cited by Samaras, 2011, p.70).

In the exploration, generation and articulation of my own personal and teacher narratives I have found that I have a voice. Finding this voice is empowering. This voice can be shared with others and so has the power to disrupt thinking. It can enable a critique of existing knowledge about the systems and contexts that education, teaching and learning occurs. It is 'a precondition for doing something about perceived injustices' (Cotton and Griffiths, 2007, p.550). It can lead to new ways of thinking and generating new perspectives; both for me as a narrator, and also for those who listen to my voice through the stories and narratives that I generate in my research.

However, at this point in my study I have found that the use of personal narratives in my research is not easy. I have found several issues and challenges leading to further questions which need to be considered and addressed. For example:

Ensuring a critical perspective is developed and presented in order to avoid navel gazing (Mitchell and Weber, 2005) As recognised by Gray (2014, p.607), descriptions and narratives can provide the basis for data, but it is important to go beyond this description in order 'to interpret, to understand and to explain' and to gain 'new insights into our data' (ibid.). *How can this be integrated into the research study? How can these new insights be documented and acknowledged?*

The presentation of personal narratives: as recognised by Griffiths, personal stories are 'also inclusive of other expressions of self' (Griffiths, 2002, p.166). *What forms could these other expressions of self take?* It is crucial that these different forms of expression are valid and acceptable forms of data. *How can these be validated and accepted?*

The validity of personal narratives: 'Personal stories are sometimes dismissed as anecdotal. They are also criticised for distorting the wider picture by over emphasising one, perhaps unrepresentative, case.' (Griffiths and MacLeod, 2008, p.124). *How can these stories not be dismissed or even considered as anecdotal?*

Socially just research is not a one size fits all, and the definition of social justice cannot be applied equally to all contexts and situations, including that of educational research. Rather, the concept of social justice needs to be deliberately considered and applied to the specific context in question, relating this to the research choices and decisions made. Therefore, I believe that it is important to justify the use of my voice within my personal and teaching narratives within my study and research, and to address some of the challenges that I have faced in my research. This writing will discuss and share my perspectives on socially just research practices, alongside some of the issues and challenges that I have encountered so far when telling my stories as part of my PhD journey.

Louise's slides can be accessed [here](#)

Developing Active Agents of Change: a conceptual framework for social justice-orientated citizenship education. (Extended Abstract)

Daryn Egan-Simon, Edge Hill University

Since the election of the coalition and Conservative governments (in 2010, 2015 and 2017 respectively), citizenship education in England has witnessed a notable shift; moving away from political literacy and civic participation and towards financial literacy, constitutional history, volunteerism, and neoliberal character education (Kisby, 2017; Weinberg and Flinders, 2018). As Weinberg and Flinders (2018, p. 5) observe, 'the character agenda—focused on personal rather than public ethics—downplays the knowledge and (collective) skills of political literacy, and in doing so undermines citizenship education as learning for democracy'. Furthermore, the introduction of Fundamental British Values (FBV) has also led to an increased securitisation and anti-terrorism agenda with teachers now expected to 'build pupils' resilience to radicalisation by promoting fundamental British values and enabling them to challenge extremist views.' (DfE, 2015). This shift in focus for citizenship education puts the emphasis on 'good' character traits such as obedience, resilience, and hard work and gives a clear message to young people 'Put up with things. Don't be political. Don't try and change the world. Change your attitude, your perspective. Change yourself instead.' (Kisby, 2017, 2018, p. 17). What this fails to do is provide space for young people to critically reflect upon political issues and challenge social injustices, and structural inequalities.

Social justice-oriented citizenship education, on the other hand, helps young people to develop the knowledge, skills, passion, civic capabilities and social responsibility to work collectively towards solutions to the planet's problems such as human rights violations, global poverty, armed conflict, environmental sustainability, and injustice and inequity (Banks, 2004; Truong-White and Mclean, 2015). Furthermore, it is designed to provide young people with opportunities to 'critically assess social, political, and economic structures and... address root causes of problems.' (Westheimer and Kahn, 2004, p. 9). This paper provides a conceptual framework for social justice-orientated citizenship education, built upon four constitutive elements - agency, dialogue, criticality, and emancipatory knowledge - for educators and educational researchers wishing to explore citizenship education within a social justice context.

It is suggested that one of the most powerful ways to develop children's sense of agency is through participation (Hart, 1992; Vandenbroeck, 2006; Short, 2012; Kisby, 2017). For example, in citizenship education, one of the most effective ways to learn about democracy is to 'live it' through active participation (Biesta, 2007; Coffield and Williamson, 2012; Short, 2012; Mayo, 2013; Kisby, 2017). Indeed, 'an understanding of democratic participation and the confidence and competence to participate can only be acquired gradually through practice; it cannot be taught as an abstraction' (Hart, 1992, p. 5). However, critics argue, children are given very few opportunities to experience democracy in action (Hart, 1992; Biesta, 2007; Coffield and Williamson, 2012; Short, 2012). Social justice-orientated citizenship education, however, involves engaging in democratic learning experiences such as

negotiating classroom rules, electing classroom representatives or incorporating pupils' suggestions for learning activities into curricula design. Though small in gesture, these approaches can be quite significant in increasing their sense of agency. Furthermore, Short (2012) suggests that one of the most effective ways to develop young people's agency is through experiential learning and student activism by looking at local issues which are important to their lives but are also connected to global problems. For example, young people could be encouraged to investigate local foodbank usage as a way of understanding the wider causes and consequences of global hunger. In order for this to be effective, students should be given ample opportunities to discuss these issues.

Dialogue should be at the very heart of citizenship education as a means of developing and empowering thoughtful, active and critical citizens. As Alexander (2011, p. 7) observes, 'democracies need citizens who can argue, reason and challenge, question, present cases and evaluate them. Democracies decline when citizens listen rather than talk, and when they comply rather than debate'. Dialogue, however, is not afforded a similar status in schools as it is in countries such as France where it is seen as a prerequisite for education for active citizenship. If children and young people are to develop the skills needed to become active citizens then they must be provided with democratic and dialogic spaces where articulacy and argument are allowed to flourish. As Kazepides (2012, p. 925) suggests, 'nothing else will improve our educational institutions and the character of our civilization so much as our efforts to cultivate genuine rational dialogue within all our schools as well as within our world'. Kazepides (2012) is right to highlight the importance of dialogue, however, it cannot exist in isolation. For children and young people to become active political citizens they must have the ability to think critically about their lives and the world within which they reside.

Critical thinking can act as a buffer against ideological indoctrination as it is a process which involves determining whether to accept a claim following careful assessment of the evidence provided. It is worth noting that the last ten years have witnessed the birth of social media and the mass growth of blogging as a means of communicating ideas. As such, it could be argued that the ability to think critically has become even more urgent in an increasingly challenging and capricious world. The cyber revolution has drastically increased the amount of easily accessible online content, which one may not be able to trust. In the era of 'fake news' children and young people need opportunities to question and evaluate what they read on the internet. However, in order to assess the validity of arguments, judge the credibility of sources, challenge unstated assumptions and present reasoned and considered arguments, pupils must have the knowledge and know-how to critically apply it.

Citizenship education should be relatable and relevant to children and young people's lives within local, national and global dimensions if it is to have an impact and long-term effect on their interest in politics (Osler and Starkey, 2003; Leighton, 2012; Hartung, 2017). Within this conceptual framework, emancipatory knowledge is both situational and relational. Indeed, knowledge within this framework is concerned with raising children's awareness and interest in local, national and global citizenship education and fostering a desire to become more politically and critically aware (Klein, 2001; Faulks, 2006; Afsari and Anarinejad, 2013). This allows children and young people to see 'others as essentially similar to themselves and arrive at a sense of citizenship based on a consciousness of humanity rather than an allegiance to the state' (Osler and Starkey, 2003, p. 23). It is guided by a commitment to social justice and equality and addresses concepts such as human rights, power and governance, sustainable development, peace and conflict, and identity and diversity. Consequently, it is about creating a space where children are 'concerned both with the quality of civic life within their own national boundaries and with human rights violations and oppression wherever they occur' (Osler and Starkey, 2003, p. 24).

The conceptual framework is underpinned by the philosophical principles of critical pedagogy which can provide historical, political and ethical guidance and optimism to educators who believe in the transformative and emancipatory power of education (Kincheloe, 2004). Critical pedagogy is not about developing a set of teaching techniques but rather an educational approach based on several interconnected philosophical principles. As such, it is a way of being as a teacher; a disposition, a philosophy, an enactment of values and principles (Rhem, 2013).

Daryn's slides can be accessed **here**.

Partnerships as mechanisms for disruption: Putting relationships to work. (Closing Keynote)

Professor Tina Cook, Liverpool Hope University

Notes from a 'provocation' delivered to the 10th Annual Conference for Research in Education "Social Justice in Troubling Times: Critical Issues in Socially Just Research and Practice" Edge Hill University, 27th Sept 2018.

Pre-ambble

When invited to speak to this conference, I was asked to present a provocation. Looking up the word provocation (on the internet) I found the most common definition to be "the act of provoking or inciting something that causes indignation, anger" In English criminal law "words or conduct that incite a person to attack another". In our case, however, I didn't think we wanted to go quite that far. What I hope follows therefore is something that presents a positioning on partnership that highlights where radical opportunities for meaningful change (here radical means thorough and fundamental rather than extreme or fanatical). Whether you agree with me or not, hopefully this presentation will provide an opportunity to consider the concept of partnership working and that it sparks some thoughts about how partnerships are understood, positioned and uses in our working lives.

Introduction

The move to more democratic, participatory research approaches has been evident in policy and practice across many cultures and continents. One of the reasons for working in this way is to facilitate knowledge democracy i.e. to ensure that voices of the seldom heard are provided with a platform: that they have agency in decision making. The platform generally considered most appropriate for this is a partnership approach. Partnerships are generally conceptualised as a means for bringing together different agencies or groups of people to through express their opinions, table their knowledge and find a shared point of consensus.

Whilst the elevation of partnership models appears to offer opportunities for more democratic ways of building knowledge, I argue that the dominant concept of partnership, rather than being facilitative of knowledge democracy, can present a barrier to its development. It can perpetuate the status quo rather than making space for socially just radical change. We tend to take it for granted that it, in the drive for social justice, partnerships will be the place to start but how often do we ask what we want that partnership mechanism to do and how will it really work? I ask then, can we build an approach to partnership working that facilitates, through the centrality of a relational approach, diversity and dynamic challenge, a means to disrupt rhetoric and common consensus: to find and establish new ways of seeing and acting for change?

Provocation

The two provocations I offer for this presentation focus on the process of partnerships working as a process for social justice. They are that:

1. the dominant concept of partnership, rather than being facilitative of knowledge democracy and social justice, can present a barrier to its development.
2. increasing the prominence and status of challenge and disruption in conceptualisations of partnerships opens the space for socially just decision making based on collaborative learning.

The fundamental challenge if partnerships are going facilitate socially just change rather than be driven by a process of decision making that can emerge from strong hierarchical and cultural positionings, is to create conditions for learning from and with each other.

Partnerships

Partnerships are generally conceptualised as creating space for bringing together a range of people to move something forward, to improve something, to do something better. They are seen as a "respectful, negotiated way of working that enables choice, participation and equity within an honest trusting relationship based on empathy, support and reciprocity" (Bidmead and Cowley: 2005). The call to work in partnership can be found in most educational policies; for instance, Education Scotland states that there is a need for local authorities and schools to 'to create strong partnerships with a range of organisations to deliver a personalised learning experience for every child and young person' (Education Scotland: n.d). In such policies, the form partnership might take is generally not made explicit (this is not unusual in such policies). The label 'partnership working' is applied as a way of encouraging work across agency boundaries and across stakeholders without articulating how a process of working in partnership might be developed, what form it might take and, if it is really to make a change, whose perceptions of improvement and change will ultimately count. Overarching common interest of the different players is assumed. Assumptions of shared ambition can, however, underplay the difficulties in bringing together different interests or indeed recognising that different interests exist. In most partnerships people come together with the expectation of being able to table their interest, needs or frameworks for moving a task forward. These are not necessarily compatible even if there is a shared ambition for working together to take action and improve practices. The question then arises about how the partnerships will be structured, how different voices can, and will, be heard and how they will be afforded agency within a partnership.

Issues for partnerships

- i. positioning: in partnership arrangements those whose working lives are spent arguing for a position related to the focus of nascent partnerships can draw on training, professional experience and expertise to argue their case. They can use facts and figures culturally accepted as evidence and powerful languages. These can over-ride and overpower those who have sets of knowledges based on actual experience but not such 'accepted' evidence. In addition, just being called senior manager, doctor or professor can intimidate those who do not have that weight of perceived knowledge behind them.
- ii. cultural expectations: it is not only that the usual leaders tend to lead and expect to ultimately make the decision in the partnership i.e. to develop a pathway based on their knowledge and understandings, but so do those who come to the table with the experience of not being heard. There is already a built-in expectation about which voices will carry the most weight. This leads to the voices of those whose knowledge is seldom heard and even more seldom acted upon, being subsumed. This is even if those who are traditionally powerful have the 'best interests' of those involved. It becomes a version of best interest framed by the understandings of traditional hierarchies of knowledge
- iii. epistemic injustice: people without professional experience and knowledge may find it hard to articulate their knowledge in a way that means it is really heard by those in power. They are unlikely to know the language to use or to have had the opportunity to consider, reflect and critique their own understandings and articulate them in a way that people who come to meetings regularly, work in committees and partnerships, manage staff, have developed. Miranda Fricker (2009) termed this epistemic injustice. Epistemic injustice includes where prejudice against other forms of representation, whether tacit or explicit, leads to deflated levels of credibility and when a lack of shared social resources makes it difficult for people to make sense of their experiences and so find it difficult to articulate the key elements of their positioning.
- iv. in the UK challenge and critique are likely to be considered as at best impolite, lacking in respect and 'being bolshy'.

The place of disruption

If partnerships are sought as a mechanism to improve situations, to develop new ways of acting that can change practices, the partnership approach cannot be about whose perceptions can dominate or predominate, but what can be learnt from bringing different and diverse knowledges together. For many, the default mechanism within partnerships is to foster debate. The intention is to hear what is being said and to make decisions in the light of what is tabled.

Debate rather than dialectical forms of discourse. So what is the difference?

Debate is a forum where questions or propositions are discussed, opposing arguments are considered and then voted upon to find the one most people can agree upon. A decision is then made based on which option might seem the most feasible. When we enter into debate, however, it has the potential to provide the opportunity for those who have facts and figures at their fingertips, and are used to using them, to draw on what might be considered recognised evidence-based knowledge to make particular points. This puts people whose knowledge is drawn from lived experience, a type of knowledge that remains undervalued in the hierarchy of knowledge, at a disadvantage. If they do not have access to wider knowledge, and are not used to debating in the given way, it becomes frustrating and they are likely to become less able to put their point across in a way that is valued by those in positions of power. Epistemic Injustice is consolidated. This is not a good starting position for democratic engagement where all voices are valued as part of a solution. It at best underutilises knowledge and at worst ignores different forms of knowledge. If partnerships become a vehicle for persuading people to do things a given way, to agree to a set of understandings that come from a dominant set of experiences and understandings, then the rich diversity of the range of knowledge within the partnership is lost. In addition, when people are standing their ground in putting their point across they are less likely to be open to learning.

Dialectical discourse involves viewing issues from multiple perspectives - drawing on seemingly contradictory points of view and sets of knowledges with the intention of learning from these to arrive at new understandings/positions for action. It occurs between two or more people holding different points of view about a subject but who wish to establish a way forward through reasoned arguments that they can all understand and believe in. This has to involve the disruption of part of the accepted knowledge brought to the table by those people.

Critical enquiry and the challenge of disruption

Challenging knowledge, not only knowledge tabled by those traditionally in power, but also knowledge brought to the table by those who are seldom heard, is at the very heart of a generative partnership approach. This might seem like a tall order given that I have just set out above the impact of epistemic injustice - how it can lead to a lack of confidence, impetus or inclination for people to take part – people become wary of coming into partnerships with those in powerful positions. Over the years, however, I have been developing my understandings of inclusion in its wider sense, and in this case, what could be called inclusive partnerships. I have come to realise that a key element that fosters dynamic partnerships, that keeps them together and keeps them learning together, is that challenge of learning together.

Several years ago I worked with a group of men who were detained under the mental health act in a forensic setting of a hospital for people with learning difficulties (Cook and Inglis 2008). Our partnership started in classical debate mode, with different men wanting to have their position recognised as legitimate and were prepared to argue for it. But not long into the project there was a shift in the communicative approach towards one where we could all learn together, and that brought the whole project to life.

“The more things just got blown into the air, the more fun it was...When we were discussing and debating stuff, during some of the discussion that we had, your mind slipped a few times before it settled. It's like you started it off and someone would say something, and it would be like, “Erm, I'm not quite sure of...” And then it started a bit of a debate up. And then by the time you finished the debate you had most of the answers and then it was like, “Erh..., you know, we've just answered it”. I just love having information and coming up with new things for it. Just love it...I've got my little drug going where I've had all the discussion and information going and flying all over the place. And its just like, Yessss! Aye. I just love learning”
(David: Researcher: Cook and Inglis: 2008)

For David the intellectual challenge he was able to engage in, the joy of discovering what he could gain from engaging with people rather than trying to shout over people, to dominate and have his point accepted, motivated him to listen and learn as well as contribute. It involved hearing the views of others and following this up with a shared questioning of views. The key element of this reflective critique is that allowed people to puncture their own current perceptions, assumptions and beliefs in the light of hearing the understandings of others (and in answering questions about their own).

If unreconstructed views and understandings, either our own or those of others, dominate in partnership processes, we are not building new knowledge for action, we are merely taking an unchallenged dominant perspective as the steer for action. This may be affected by conversations, amended at the edges, but fundamentally it is likely to be a way of making a choice

between recognised courses of action rather than a process of using knowledges to design radical new ways of acting that draw on non-traditional knowledges. In a conceptualisation of partnership where the focus is using that partnership approach to make spaces to reflect on assumptions, understandings and knowledges held by the partners, challenge and critique must be recognised as positive forces. Rather than entering into discussion in order to articulate what we already know we enter into a critical examination of thinking and knowledge. Facilitating such understandings is the fundamental goal of critical reflection. It disturbs current knowns. This is, however, a process. It starts from those elements of partnerships identified by Bidmead and Cowley (previously mentioned above). Rather than a single action, decision making in partnership starts from building relationships, respect and a space where reciprocity, equal rights to stating understandings and tabling your position for critique, are accepted as central.

Critical Enquiry as positive disruption

In a recent project, the Family Based Positive Support Project (FaBPos²), family carers and course facilitators worked together to understand what might underpin an effective course to build resilience for those who lived stressful lives. At the heart of this project was the notion of a communicative space, a space for critical enquiry. This was founded on the following:

- Building a welcoming space that was not a traditional professional space (out with institutional walls and familiar to many of the family carers taking part in the project).
- Professionals/practitioners listening rather than speaking
- Professionals/practitioners speaking from the starting point of those who were less accustomed to speaking
- Building in time for reflection on the ‘thinking’ in the discussion as well as the actions being discussed.
- Overtly identifying the importance of critique for disruption.

The way in which we gathered and worked in the chosen space gained the nomenclature ‘The Kitchen Table Approach’. It was valued by everyone as an informal space, and “good because we’re all sat in together” (Family Carer). It was also valued as a hard-working space. Being critical, both for family carers and professionals involved in the project was central. To support family carers, who may have felt uneasy about being critical I introduced the positive impact of being critical by using the fact that for most family carers, the impetus to join the project was to make it effective for other people in the same situation as themselves.

² FaBPos: a partnership approach between NHS practitioners (psychologists), family carers and academic researchers that looked at a new ways for providing support to families who care for an adult relative with a learning disability and behavior described as challenging.

"It's important that we are all honest about how things are working, honest for ourselves and honest about the role of others. If, because we all like each other [laughter from family carers] we just say things are fine, then the next family carers that come on this course will get it in the same way as we are doing it now. If it is not working for you then it may well not work for them". (Academic researcher).

Such a positioning moves the communicative spaces within partnerships from being merely descriptive processes of what is, to being reflective, then from reflection to critical self-reflection and then to joint critical reflection. This challenged the partners, both family carers and the psychologist facilitating the course, to create a mutually enhancing process for learning together as a catalyst to developing more effective working practices. Shared learning, rather than learning from, was recognised as the key element in making the FaBPos project effective by this group of family carers³.

"I think it's helpful to reflect.....I think it's nice to have that freedom that we can keep coming back to our individual stories – linking it in.....It was nice to have that freedom just to kind of flow.....the conversation just naturally leads on to something else... the only time it's ever quiet is when we're thinking about something - and when we're eating, yeah [laughter]. When you're thinking about something and you can see everybody else is just...taking that moment to think about something... I think it just naturally leads on... it's nice how one person can start talking about, like, a particular thing, which sort of has the domino effect. Everyone will be like, "Oh, yeah..." And somebody else will come out with their experience. And it, you know, clicks it off to everybody. And it's just following on the natural flow of chat. We're a bit like Loose Women, aren't we? (Family Carer A)

Facilitation was important for enabling people to be both self-reflective and collectively build ideas and understandings

"I think where you're invaluable is that you [the facilitator] very subtly manage the conversations. And it's lovely. And, sort of, you let people have their time. But you also... validate people. And you, sort of...make people stop and think (Family Carer B)

Through this process people moved beyond their own familiar understandings to learn something new, to 'go beyond the already "expert" understandings which defined their starting points' (Winter 2002, p.36). Strands of knowledge and learning were unearthed and critiqued. These strands ultimately acted as catalysts for new knowing leading to development and change. This was not, however, just a change in thinking for family carers. The impact of the critical enquiry process was evident in what was said by the facilitators of the course the family carers were engaged in developing.

"One of the big breakthroughs...what's been great, is doing it together [as] what we've ended up with is different from what we started off with [We've] created something that none of us would have thought of if we had not gone through it" (Course facilitator A)

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To learn something new about an element of practice in which you already have considerable expertise may mean that you have to let go of some of your own ideas/beliefs about working practices. This is not easy for any party but often it is the professionals who find it the hardest (In 't Veld: 2010). Reasons for this can include the weight of institutional inertia, dominance of the notion of professional knowledge, pride and arrogance but also insecurity i.e. worry about losing face/professionalism, worry about saying you 'don't know' or even the worry about leaving spaces where others might construct ideas.

"Typically, what people like to do - and I'm no different... you want to stack your options. Have a plan to follow. Because your greatest fear is running out of momentum, running out of ideas, running out of steam....I suspect... it's driven a little bit by fear" (Facilitator B)

Without professional learning and change, however, it was unlikely that the FaBPos course would have been able to address some of the issues that, in the past, led family carers to perceive professionals as "all give and no take" (Family Carer C). What emerged was a process termed by one family carer as 'invisible facilitation'.

³ Family carers in this group were all women. One male family carer took part and one of the facilitators was a male

The importance of invisible facilitation, not just offering what you know, but staying back and learning with and through the conversations, was a crucial professional learning point. The voices of the family carers enabled the facilitators (the psychologists) to recognise their own need to be 'in control' and to have 'a plan' and to see how their own dominance would create an imbalance in working partnerships with family carers to the point where family carers excluded themselves from partnerships with services.

"It's so easy for us as professionals to think these are the latest psychological benefits. We should make them available. Which is a decent start. But how you go about making them available is you do unto them. I think one of the things that we've learnt in this course is you don't do unto them. That's so crucial. So, dismantle the doing unto" (Course facilitator A)

Professional practices were thus disrupted through this process of what Habermas (1998) termed reciprocal perspective taking,

"mutual recognition, reciprocal perspective taking, a shared willingness to consider one's own conditions through the eyes of the stranger, and to learn from one another."
(Habermas, 1998:159)

and what Sumara and Luce Kaplar called co-labouring.

"... toil, distress, trouble: exertions of the faculties of the body or mind ... an activity which is at times likely to be uncomfortable." (Sumara and Luce-Kapler 1993:393)

This facilitator noted the importance of not being comfortable, of following a formula.

"I always find them (the FaBPos course days) very, very challenging. And I think it's always being on edge, an edge, in foreign territory. And I suspect that's probably an important part of it. And if I did it again, and I started to feel more relaxed, the danger would be that I would be falling on a formula" (Facilitator A).

This openness to new thoughts and ideas, providing a space where people felt comfortable enough to be critical of themselves in the light of other positioning, and to critique the positionings of others, was fundamental to creating an effective course.

Re-cap

The question I have been posing during this presentation /provocation is that if partnerships bring together "mutually incompatible alternatives (Feyerabend: 1975), how does a mechanism of a partnership, based on mutual respect, really work? What does that mutual respect enable and how can it do that? What I have suggested, is:

- that one of the assumed understandings for creating good relationships to enable partnerships to exist – that of valuing the points of view/knowledges of others in a non-disruptive fashion – needs to be disrupted.
- that for learning to take place assumed and presumed knowledge, whatever its source, needs to be critiqued and disrupted otherwise the status quo is left undisturbed.
- the opportunity to transform knowledge is based on the effectiveness of the communicative space to not only allow the voices of the seldom heard to have agency but also to enable those who have traditionally been seen as the dominant knowledge holders to feel sufficiently confident to be able listen to others and to relinquish some of their long-held beliefs, assumptions and practices.

The dominant concept of partnership, rather than being facilitative of knowledge democracy, can present a barrier to its development. Increasing the prominence and status of challenge and disruption in conceptualisations of partnerships opens up the space for socially just decision making for change. All knowledges should be brought to a partnership to be disrupted and generated not collected. Creating communicative spaces for shared learning is fundamental to socially just actions.

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